

SENATE BILL 4104

By Herron

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, relative to authorizing the state board of education to develop and adopt a curriculum for a state funded elective course consisting of a nonsectarian, nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, culture, and politics.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 10, is amended by adding the following as a new, appropriately designated section:

49-6-10__.

(a) The state board of education is authorized to approve a curriculum for an elective state funded course consisting of a nonsectarian, nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, culture, and politics. The curriculum and associated textbook shall meet academic rigor and standards of the state board of education in the same manner as required for approval of any other elective course and textbook approved by the state board and shall meet the requirements of the Constitutions of the United States and Tennessee. The course provided for in this section shall:

(1) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;

(2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural traditions; and

(3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs.

(b) An LEA that elects to offer a course and utilize an associated textbook approved in accordance with subsection (a) of this section shall implement such course in accordance with the Constitutions of the United States and Tennessee, including the manner in which the course is taught in the classroom and the assignment by the LEA of the individual teaching the course. The individual assigned to teach the course shall meet all certification requirements and all other provisions of this chapter relating to personnel employed by local units of administration. In addition, no person shall be assigned to teach such course based in whole or in part on any religious test, profession of faith or lack of faith, prior or present religious affiliation or lack of affiliation, or criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of beliefs about the Bible or in violation of Title 49, Chapter 6, Part 80 or Section 49-6-2906.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008, the public welfare requiring it.